M Herskovits & Herskovits S-5 (1928-1929) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Saramacca

but he did face about, and forgetting his seketi began to pole in earnest.

In a few moments his body glistened with the exertion, and over the circle and snake of kamemba in the small of his back the perspiration ran down in a trickle. When he had almost caught up he slackened his speed, and he and Bibifo talked about the river. Old Bibifo knew the river well. He was born beyond the Granman's country. A snake swam across the path of the boat, Bayo said. It was good luck. "See, look," he called. His eyes were sharp. The old man saw it, too, and then he called to us. There, close to the shore, a little ahead of us, a constrictor twined its tail about a liana, hanging head down, with a salamander slowly disappearing into its mouth. There was a slight jerk, the liana shook, the snake swallowed, and another bit of the salamander was out of sight.

Farther ahead we heard the report of a gun, and the crying of the mate of the wounded bird followed us for a long while. Bayo and Bibifo identified each cry, called by name the things that grew, planned about their timber rafts when they got back, until the next rapids were reached and passed and the conversation could be resumed, and then they talked about things which they did not care to have the Bakra know, and though they spoke none of the words of their ritual language, we could not understand anything they said. It was not until later that we learned to work out some of the elisions in their speech.

A strip of sandy beach showed where a village stood, and as we passed it, we could see the azang, the spiritual guard of palm fronds, preventing evil spirits from entering the village. We saw also a strip of white hanging from the end of a stick which had been put up for the ancestors, and beyond, the low shelter for the roughly carved and weathered image holding an obia pot on its head. Under the azang the path stretched like a narrow ribbon which was soon lost as the walls of green converged.

"Is that another village?" we said, pointing at a pale stretch across the river.

G:\Suriname\336 K-8 (1949-1958) 1961 523 Bush Negroes 523
Boni

/217 cont./

774 Most of the Boni are not concerned with their akka. The only ones who take heed of it are those who have reasons to believe it irritated. The worship rendered varies a good deal from one individual to another in the nature and frequency of the rites performed.

774 For example, K..... of Papaikan village, prey to a
779 persistent streak of bad luck, went to consult a Creole lukumi
[647] from Suriname, who revealed to him that it was the doing of unsatisfied desires of his akka. His akka wanted a black dog and a copper bracelet. He procured both for himself, and since, he says, he no longer has the same bad luck.

796 B.... head of T... village, has in a corner of his hut
798 a post crudely carved in the shape of a bust with a half calabash from which emerge stalks of sangasfu on its head. At the side is a small fraga tiki. He tells me that this is the god of the cult of his akka; these rites are strictly personal with him.

794 Most of the akka esteem white beads and red cloth. If
[822] one sees a Boni wear a red cloak, one can be almost sure that it is by order of his akka.

[787] If someone's mind wanders or he has bizarre dreams, he may see in this the feeling that his akka wishes to leave him
[789] and that he is in danger of its happening. He then goes to ask an obiaman to make him an akka tetey: this is a ring of fibers worn on the big toe and which is supposed to prevent the akka from going away.

These rites vary a lot from one individual to the other, but they have a common principle. If someone begins to attend to his akka, he cannot abandon the worship during his lifetime, or else the akka will avenge itself.

Akka worship is strictly personal and is not bequeathed upon death.

/23° cont./

Not just anyone may resort to divination on behalf of someone else: only the eldest have the right to do it, and it has happened that the grand man punished offenders severely.

Fate. The Refugee Blacks do not attribute all misfortunes to supra-human causes. They have the notion of natural accident. They say ... or again ogi mini mi, misfortune met me. They also accept the idea of natural death. They usually regard as natural death that of the very old, the infirm from birth, and sickly children.

Divination blames fate in ten to 20 per cent of accidents. It is the usual explanation for burning accidents.

/238/ Magic Forces

As we have shown, the Refugee Blacks consider beings and things as a world of forces capable of acting on one another, outside of time and space, according to laws which men cannot understand but of which they believe they have a partial and empirical knowledge transmitted by tradition since the time of the ancestors. They distinguish negative magic forces, wisi, which have the effect of diminishing the vital force of men, which makes them sick or kills them, and positive magic forces, obia, which come from the gods: the obia comes to increase the vital force of men, giving them protection, immunity, or knowledge. But no power is in essence a principle of good or evil; nothing is impossible for him who knows the formulas; this is why the magic of the Refugee Blacks is reduced to a perpetual and indecisive struggle between obia and wisi.

Wisi. Wisi is sorcery in the African sense of the term, that is, the use of magic procedures to harm others; wisi is for the Refugee Blacks the pre-eminently criminal act, at the same time against morals and against society. The struggle against

152 1241 cont. /
123 Jealousy. To speak of jealousy as a negative magic force is
254 not to be false to the thought of the Refugee Blacks. They re-
777 gard it as an attenuated force of wisi, capable of bringing mis-
fortunes even if no sorcery has been formulated. Jealousy is
152 157 very marked in their character, associated with an individual on
verging on asocial tendencies. When somebody is accused of
257 wisi, jealousy is the commonest explanation of the crimes
152 123 attributed to him; it is thought for example that a man can be
jealous of his brother's growing rich to the point of making him
die; that a woman may be jealous of the beauty or health of
152 her sister's children. Not laying themselves open to jealousy
156 is the constant preoccupation of the Refugee Blacks; one ob-
128 serves it in daily behavior, for example in the greetings which
576 they exchange on the river. They never say, "I am well,"
but: "I feel only fair." If they come back from hunting they
say, "I found a little."

152 Examples are not lacking of people who avoid building
156 a fine house or buying an outboard motor in order not to give
128 cause for jealousy. This preoccupation has profound reper-
[182] cussions on the material life and the economy of the Refugee
[463] Blacks; it explains in particular the absence of specialized
professions and trade among them.

[183] Many aspects of the customary law of the Refugee Blacks
[571] have no other function than to exorcise, if one may say so,
tendencies toward jealousy and selfishness which, if they were
given free rein, would poison the life of the collectivity.

76 The rites of death and mourning, which we have shown
101 to constitute the pivot of the social life of the Refugee Blacks,
725 are entirely based on the idea of preserving the surviving spouse
128 from the effect of the jealousy of the deceased.

/291 cont./

159 464 463 Wishing to take advantage of all the possibilities which turn up, the Refugee Blacks are led to learn simultaneously the traditional techniques of their group, boating, boat-building, felling of trees, squaring of wood, and /building/ framework. In these techniques they may be considered specialized workers.

159 812 Proud of their strength and knowledge, sure of themselves, the Refugee Blacks are never worried about the future and consider life as an exciting adventure, ceaselessly bringing new things. If the past year has been bad, the new year will be better, with God's help. Nobody doubts that he will find gainful work again.

152 182 Influence of jealousy: absence of specialized professions and trade. Another strong psychological tendency having a direct influence on the economy is jealousy.

152 828 552 953 999 The effect of jealousy, and the fear of jealousy, is to limit enrichment and to maintain a de facto equality: it often happens that talented people forego undertaking profitable work in order not to give occasion for the jealousy which would render their position in the village difficult and might draw misfortunes upon them; for people have the idea that jealousy draws down illnesses and calamities upon him who is the object of it and on his near relatives, by the action of a natural force, even without sorcery being formulated.

754 552 441 829 Fear of sorcery interferes in the same way; one who becomes unusually rich is almost inevitably accused of being a sorcerer and may be obliged to leave the country. Particularly vulnerable are those, very rare, who engage in trade. People do not suspect of sorcery a man who is seen to become rich by /292/ working ceaselessly. But the trader whose wealth increases without his furnishing obvious work, is quickly regarded as a "committed one," accused of having his good luck as a result of a pact with the devil.